

Scarce and rare birds in Wales 2009



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Front cover photo. Glossy Ibises, Pembrey, Carmarthen by Gary Harper.

Back cover photo. Cattle Egret, Newport, Pembroke by Richard Crossen.

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Introduction

This is the thirteenth annual report of the Welsh Records Panel (WRP) covering the occurrence of rare and scarce species in Wales in 2009.

	0-1 records	2-5 records	6-10 records	11-20 records	21-50 records	51-100 records	100+ records	Total
2009	1	4	1	17	47	7	22	98
2008	0	6	8	17	31	13	34	105
2007	2	6	7	4	10	5	5	39
2006	1	5	4	5	18	12	12	57
2005	4	10	9	5	22	19	28	97

So was 2009 a vintage year for rare and scarce birds? With only the one addition to the Welsh List and only 4 records of species recorded on fewer than ten occasions, it probably wasn't. However looking at the last five years, it did compare favourably with both 2005 and 2008 in terms of the total number of records, and far better than 2006 and 2007. The first occurrence of Brown-headed Cowbird in Wales was part of what can only be described as a minor influx into GB. It was noticed and correctly identified in a small garden near Angle, Pembroke, by the owners and by the time they informed others, the bird had moved on. In a similar fashion four of the other major rarities were "there and gone" - the Black Stork in Carmarthen, the Great Spotted Cuckoo in Pembroke, the Penduline Tit in Glamorgan and Paddyfield Warbler on Bardsey, Caernarfon. Only the Caernarfon Royal Tern was twitchable, but tell that to the many travelling birders who failed to connect as it proved very elusive, despite being in North Wales for at least five days. Although no longer the rarity it once was the major scarce bird event in 2009 was the influx of Spanish Glossy Ibis. One wonders that without some of the individuals being colour-ringed how much double-counting would have occurred and whether any of us would have believed some of the movements both within Wales and the GB.

The work of the Welsh Records Panel continues to be made relatively easy due to the quality of submissions and with many including identification-confirming photographs. However, the Panel is still uncertain on how to deal with claims of Common Redpoll and Siberian Chiffchaffs. For many observers the hesitancy over dealing with the Redpolls has come as a surprise as the problem of separating Common from Lesser Redpoll is not one that has been raised in the birding literature and many observers consider this straight forward. Although the Panel published criteria to separate these two species we continue to have concerns on whether the criteria are sufficiently robust to ensure the correct identification of Common Redpoll and what level of supporting evidence is actually required to prove a claim. In researching the issues around identification of Common Redpoll, we have been in contact with County Recorders and Bird Observatory Wardens in western Britain and other respected observers all who actually share our concerns on how to safely separate the two species, especially in spring. The view from those contacted is that this is actually one of the most challenging identifications facing observers in GB. A good insight into the problems can be gained from the Bardsey Bird Observatory Website where many photos of trapped individuals are available. Despite numerous published papers on the identification of Siberian Chiffchaff, and much discussion on websites, there is still some confusion surrounding their identification. It has become apparent that what we considered a "classic" Siberian Chiffchaff ten years ago (a pale grey and white Chiffchaff with a hint of a wing bar and a sad melancholy call) may not actually be one.

Although the trapped individuals submitted to us are more in line with what is now accepted as “classic” Siberian the majority of the field records are still of the “grey and white type”. We are currently waiting for additional identification papers to be published to continue clarifying what constitutes an acceptable Siberian Chiffchaff, but we still welcome all submissions of this form.

Although 2009 was not a vintage year this report does contain details of two firsts from previous years. A Sora Rail from 1932 that had been incorrectly identified and came to light during a quiz and the 2002 Glamorgan ‘Southern Skua’, which although the DNA shows that it was from the southern hemisphere, it cannot be allocated to a specific form. Further work may eventually enable sub-specific identification.

Reg Thorpe, Chair of WRP

This report follows the taxonomy, names and systematic sequence of the new BOU British List (2009) and includes all those records assessed by the WRP along with those accepted by BBRC (shown in *italics*). Descriptions of scarce species were received from the County Recorders of all Welsh Counties and occasionally directly from the observers. The report includes many digital photos and WRP welcomes the submission of any photographic evidence but this ideally should be accompanied by supporting evidence. Occasionally the Panel also receives descriptions of other species to assess from County Recorders and Editors. These are not detailed in this report.

Scarce species (assessed by WRP) are defined as those occurring on average 5 times or fewer annually in Wales. As of Jan. 1st 2009 the full list of species which the Panel considers is as follows: Bean Goose, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Ferruginous Duck, Surf Scoter, White-billed Diver, Cory’s Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Wilson’s Petrel, Night Heron, Great White Egret, Cattle Egret, Purple Heron, White Stork, Black Kite, Montagu’s Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard, White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Corncrake, Spotted Crake, Crane, Stone-Curlew, American Golden Plover, Kentish Plover, Temminck’s Stint, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Caspian Gull, White-winged Black Tern, Alpine Swift, Short-toed Lark, Wood Lark, Shore Lark, Bee-eater, Red-rumped Swallow, Red-throated Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Nightingale, Bluethroat, Aquatic Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Barred Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Radde’s Warbler, Pallas’s Warbler, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Rose-coloured Starling, Red-backed Shrike, Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole, Bearded Tit, Serin, Common Redpoll, Arctic Redpoll, Common Rosefinch, Corn Bunting, Cirl Bunting, Ortolan Bunting, Rustic Bunting and Little Bunting.

Scarce races are considered on the same basis (ie. all those occurring on average 5 times or fewer annually). However, it is acknowledged that the status, and in some case the identification, of some races is very uncertain. The WRP welcomes well-documented submissions of races that observers consider to be scarce in Wales. Through this process we hope to establish the occurrence of these forms but submissions will probably in most cases require detailed descriptions, photographic evidence and in some cases biometrics or a specimen.

BBRC have requested submission of rare races (see Kehoe, C. 2006 Racial identification and assessment in Britain, *British Birds* 99: 619-645 for extra guidance) and the WRP will forward any claims that are considered sufficiently rare for BBRC to assess. Examples of races for which the

WRP would like to receive reports are Black Brant Goose – *nigricans*, Iceland Gull – *kumlieni*, Common Guillemot – *hyperborea*, Razorbill – *torda*, Little Auk – *polaris*, Great Spotted Woodpecker – *major*, Grey-headed Wagtail – *thunbergi*, Siberian Chiffchaff – *tristis*, Treecreeper – *familiaris*, Coal Tit – *ater*, Jay – *glandarius*, Jackdaw – *monedula*, Redpolls – *islandica* / *rostrata*, and Bullfinch – *pyrrhula*.

In the systematic list the figures following each species / race name refer to the number of accepted individuals in Wales up to 1991, since 1991 but not including 2009 and finally the number this year. Where two records probably relate to the same bird then only one is added to the total, while if two records are only possibly of the same bird, then both are added into the totals. In some cases the figures suggest changes in occurrence in the last twenty years, although it should be noted that some apparent declines may be due, to some extent, to a decline in the habit of observers submitting descriptions or some apparent increases to improved identification criteria and better optics or cameras.

The names that appear after individual records are of those observers who sent in descriptions (if the finder is known then his /her name is included in italics) and are included here to show recognition of the time taken to produce a description and also the observer's commitment to the nationally recognised system of rare bird record assessment, unless the submitted specifically requests that their name is not shown.

The Panel consists of six voting members, in 2009 they were: Reg Thorpe (Chairman) – Caernarfon, Mike Powell – Glamorgan, Steve Culley – Anglesey, Darryl Spittle - Gwent, Simon Hugheston-Roberts – Caernarfon, Steve Stansfield - Bardsey and a non-voting Secretary, Jon Green - Ceredigion.

The longest serving member of the Panel retires and a new member is elected annually by the Welsh County Recorders and the Council of the Welsh Ornithological Society. We would like to thank Darryl and Simon for all their hard work on the panel's behalf, both leave the panel at the end of this set of circulations. WRP is always on the look out for new members, anyone who is interested should contact their County Recorder or the WRP Secretary.

Descriptions, photos, videos and any other relevant evidence of WRP species should be submitted as soon as possible after the sighting (WRP description forms are available from the Secretary / County Recorders and downloadable from the WOS Website), preferably via the County Recorder or alternatively direct to the **WRP Secretary: Jon Green, Crud yr Awel, Bowls Road, Blaenporth, Cardigan, Ceredigion. SA43 2AR. (01239 811561)**. The Panel are keen to receive any descriptions or photographs of electronic form, either on disc or by e-mail: **welshrarebirds@tiscali.co.uk**

No acceptable records of the following species were received by the Panel in 2009:

Bean Goose, American Wigeon, Ferruginous Duck, White-billed Diver, Night Heron, Purple Heron, Montagu's Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard, White-tailed Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Stone-Curlew, American Golden Plover, Kentish Plover, Temminck's Stint, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Caspian Gull, White-winged Black Tern, Shore Lark, Bee-eater, Red-rumped Swallow, Tawny Pipit, Nightingale, Greenish Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Radde's Warbler, Pallas's Warbler, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Common Redpoll, Arctic Redpoll, Corn Bunting, Cirl Bunting, Ortolan Bunting, Rustic Bunting and Little Bunting.

Systematic List of Accepted Records in 2009

Green-winged Teal (10, 28, 2)

Anas carolinensis

Corhwyaden Asgell - Werdd

Breeds in North America.

Ceredigion: Male, Ynyshir, 4th Jan. (J. Davies).

Gwent: Male, Goldcliff, 17th – 30th Jan.
(N. Casburn, per K. Jones). Photo opposite.

Anglesey: Male, Llyn Coron, 11th Feb. (KG Croft).

Pembroke: Male, Marloes Mere, 4th May (DJ Astins).

The individuals at Ynyshir and Llyn Coron are considered returning birds that have been in those areas in previous winters and are therefore not added into the totals above.



Ring-necked Duck (12, 24, 1)

Aythya collaris

Hwyaden Dorchog

Breeds North America, winters south to Costa Rica.

Ceredigion: Male, Cwm Ystwyth, 4th Jan (J. Valentine).
Female Llyn Blaenmelindwr, then Rhosrhydd, 30th Nov, then 5th Dec.
until 1st Jan. 2010 (C. Bird, J. Davis).

The male bird is thought to be the same returning bird first seen in that area in 2007, while the female is thought to have moved from one lake to another in north Ceredigion before arriving at Llyn Pencarreg, Carmarthen in the winter/ spring 2010.

Lesser Scaup (0, 2, 0)

Aythya affinis

Hwyaden Benddu Leiaf

Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay & S to Washington & South Dakota. Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters along both coastlines of USA, in E from New Jersey to Mexico, W Indies, C America to N Colombia.

2008 Glamorgan: 1st w male, Cosmeston Lakes / Cardiff Bay 26th Dec. – 8th May 2009 (GN Smith et al), returning 11th Oct. until the end of the year.

Surf Scoter (22, 21, 1)

Melanitta perspicillata

Mor-hwyaden yr Ewyn

Breeds northern North America, winters on the Atlantic coast, south to North Carolina.

2009 Gower: 1st year female, Mumbles, 19th – 27th Nov. (PR & SL Murray).

2008 Meirionnydd: Male, Harlech, 29th Dec. (Rh. Jones).

Both of these refer to new arrivals, which if past form is anything to go on, will probably return to the same area in future years.

Pacific Diver (0, 1, 0)

Gavia pacifica

Trochydd y Mor Tawel

Breeds NE Siberia from lower Indigirka river E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, & N North America from Alaska E to Hudson Bay & S Baffin Island. Winters in Pacific Ocean, in Asia S to Japan & E China, & in North America S to Baja California & Sonora, Mexico.

Pembroke: Llys y fran Res., 25th & 26th Feb. (R. Dobbins, per DJ Astins)

Presumed returning individual first reported there January 2007, then February 2008.

Wilson's Petrel (3, 9, 2)

Oceanites oceanicus *Pedryn Wilson*

A vagrant.

Pembroke: off Strumble Head, 1st Aug.

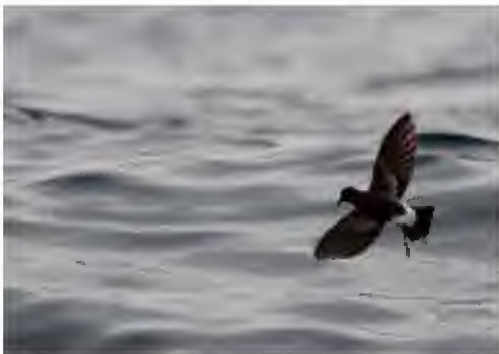
(R. Stonier).

At sea in the Celtic Deep, 5th Aug.

(photo. N. O'Sullivan).

Wilson's Petrel was dropped from the BBRC list in 2006, these represent the first accepted records since then. The latter record came from a shark-fishing boat, out in the Irish Sea.

All records of this species in Wales have come from the same county, either off Strumble Head or from pelagic trips, the last being on 7th Aug. 2000.



Cory's Shearwater (34, 60, 1)

Calonectris diomedea

Aderyn-Drycin Cory

A temperate to tropical species, nesting in colonies and rocky islands in the Canaries, Madeira and Azores and through the Mediterranean.

Gower: Swansea, 12th Aug. found exhausted, taken into care, then released the following day (per B. Stewart, photos below). On measurements this individual was considered to be of the form *borealis*.



Great Shearwater (81, 151, 3)

Puffinus gravis

Aderyn Drycin Mawr

Late summer / autumn passage migrant that breeds in the south Atlantic.

Pembroke: off Strumble Head, 17th Aug. (A. Rogers), 29th Aug. & 3rd Oct. (both R. Stonier).

Great White Egret (5, 24, 4)

Ardea alba

Creyr Mawr Gwyn

Breeds Netherlands in small numbers and from Hungary eastwards to Japan and south Australia, Africa south of the Sahara also southern North, Central and South America. European population winters mostly in the north Mediterranean. This species dropped off the BBRC list of rare birds, onto the WRP list as of Jan. 1st 2006.

Ceredigion: Ynyslas, 11th Apr. (M. Hughes).

Caernarfon: Criccieth, 15th May (I. Hawkins).

Montgomery: Lake Vrynwy, 24th Aug. (S. Taylor).

Meirionnydd: Tywyn, 31st Oct. (D. Clark).

This species is turning up with great regularity, especially so as up to the end of 1991 there had only been five records in Wales.

Cattle Egret (5, 22, 5)

Bubulcus ibis

Creyr y Gwartheg

Common and widespread in S. Spain & Portugal with small expanding populations in France and Italy. Northern populations disperse outside the breeding season, mostly into Africa.

2009 Pembroke: Dale, 17th Dec. 2008 – 3rd Jan. 2009 (KJS Devonald).

Castlemartin, 1st Jan. (C. Hurford).

Newport, 22nd Mar. – 14th Apr. (S. Baxter).

Angle Bay, 19th Oct. (R. Crossen).

2009 Anglesey: Plas Bog, 12th June (I. Sims, per KG Croft).

2009 Meirionnydd: Tywyn, 2nd Nov. (M. Shrubbs).

2008 E. Glamorgan: Kenfig Pool, 31st Mar. (N. Donaghy).

2008 Carmarthen: Penclacwydd, 10th May (B. Stewart).

Juv. Banc-y-Lord, Kidweli, 5th Sept. (D. Davidson).

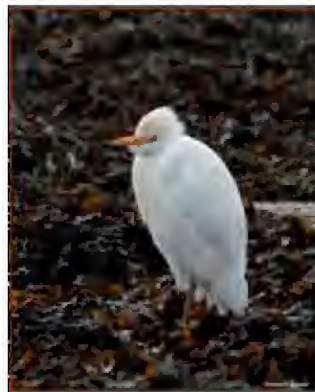
Adult, Banc-y-Lord, Kidweli, 14th – 21st Sept. (D. Davidson).

Penclacwydd, 24th Oct. (D. Williams et al).

The extra four records for 2008, assessed by BBRC, makes a total of 17 reported in that year. This species dropped of the BBRC list onto WRP list as of 1st Jan. 2009. This makes the third year of influxes of this species, added to the fact that a pair bred just over the water in Somerset last year, perhaps this will be the next egret species to breed in Wales ?

Although the distinctive bare part colouration of Cattle Egret can be readily judged, even on brief views, the spectre of Cattle x Little Egret hybrids are now a reality, with recent photographic evidence from Holland.

Photo. opposite taken at Angle Bay, Pembroke by R. Crossen.



Black Stork (5 , 1, 1)

Ciconia nigra

Ciconia Du

A vagrant.

Carmarthen: Machynys, Llanelli, 1st June (BE Jones, S. Lewis).

The last record in Wales was of the individual on the Alaw Estuary, Anglesey in July – August 2007.

White Stork (- , 16, 1)

Ciconia ciconia

Ciconia Gwyn

Migrant in warmer Boreal to warm temperate zones, USSR, China and central Europe.

Brecon: Cilwhyrbert Farm, Libanus, and subsequently seen flying heading towards Penylan, Beacons by two other observers while driving along the A470, 16th Apr.
(H. & A. Spencer).

This species has been seen every year in Wales over the past five years, lets just hope that the increases in numbers of other heron species will be mirrored by this species in the future.

Glossy Ibis (11 , 2, 25)

Plegadis falcinellus

Crymanbig Ddu

Migrant from warm temperate and tropical zones, Greece, Turkey, North Africa and the Middle East.

Carmarthen: immature, Coedbach Marsh, Kidweli, 3rd Sept. (M. Halpin et al).
25 immatures, Pembrey, 4th Sept., with ten remaining until 6th (per R. Hunt).
Immature, Coedbach Marsh, Kidweli, 13th – 18th Sept. (D. Davidson).
Cere/Pemb: Immature, Teifi Marshes & Estuary, 13th – 18th Sept. (H & S Thomas,
Drs. W & D. James, J. Green, R. Dobbins).
9, Teifi Estuary then Nevern Estuary, 18th Sept. (Dr. W. James, S. Baxter).
Anglesey: 12 immatures, Alaw Estuary, 17th Sept. (CJ Lane).
Llyn Parc Mawr, 22nd Sept – 2nd Oct. (C. Basterfield et al).
Over Hen Felin, Cemlyn (RI Thorpe, J. Dyda) then Carmel Head, 26th Sept.
(M. Sutton).

Caernarfon: 10, Bardsey, 18th Sept. (A. Clarke, Rh. Jones).

A staggering influx into the SW, of immature birds, which were displaced north west from southern Spain. Several individuals had been colour-ringed or wing-tagged and this allowed them to be tracked once they reached the UK.

One such movement included the 12 at the Alaw Estuary which then passed over Bardsey (losing two individuals on the way), then moving south along the Ceredigion / Pembroke coast, losing one more individual, visiting the Teifi then Nevern and off to who knows where.



The Pembrey Glossy Ibis flock by B. Stewart.

The true number of individuals involved in this influx is beyond calculation, with many roving birds. BBRC (see their report) has assumed that all these individuals were from the influx of 25 into the Pembrey area before breaking up into smaller flocks, some of which dispersed north before moving back south through Anglesey, Caernarfon & Pembrokeshire. Two others moved east and were subsequently seen in Norfolk. Several individuals were ringed / wing-tagged. The rings show that the birds originated from the Donana National Park in Andalusia, Spain and from Camargue, France where they were ringed as nestlings in May & June 2009. All birds are therefore juveniles or first-winters.

Other flocks arrived in Essex (seven) on 5th Sept., Devon (six) on 19th Sept., twelve in County Wexford on 1st Sept. and then eleven in County Kerry on 13th Oct. Again some birds had rings and these showed that they were different birds to those in Britain, and point to a total movement of 60+ birds from their Spanish breeding area.

Black Kite (6, 6, 1)

Milvus migrans

Barcud du

Breeds throughout continental Europe, most in Spain, France and Germany, with smaller populations in all, except maritime NW Europe and Scandinavia. To E, breeds European Russia to Kazakhstan and C Siberia. Nominate race winters Africa and NW Indian subcontinent. Other races resident or dispersive in sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, E and SE Asia and Australia.

Caernarfon: Bardsey, 26th Oct. (SD Stansfield).

Gyr Falcon (12, 1, 1)

Falco rusticolus *Hebog y Gogledd*

Gower: first winter female, white morph, Llanddewi and nearby, 17th – 19th Dec.

(A. Lucas et al)

Photo. Opposite by N. Fairney.

This was the first accepted record for the county. The last accepted record was from South Stack in 2002.

An escaped bird was reported from Pembroke in February and another from Gwent in October.



Corn Crane (-, 39, 1)

Crex crex *Rhegen yr Yd*

Very rare breeding bird in Britain, mainly in north & western Scotland and Ireland. Last bred in Wales in 1994.

E. Glamorgan: found dead at St. Mellons, Cardiff, 11th Sept.
(A. Dowson).



Spotted Crane (-, 30+, 3)

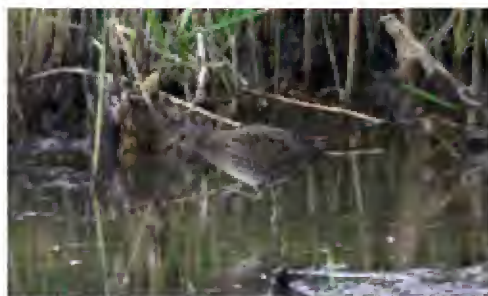
Porzana porzana *Rhegen fraith*

Scarce breeding bird in Britain. Passage migrant.

Anglesey: Rhoscolyn, 10th May
(I. Sims).

Caern./Denb.: Conwy RSPB 25th – 26th
Aug. (R. Sandham).

Ceredigion: Teifi Marshes, 13th – 14th
Sept. (P. Mahiques et al).



Spotted Crane, Conwy RSPB by R. Swindlehurst.

Sora Rail (3, 0, 0)

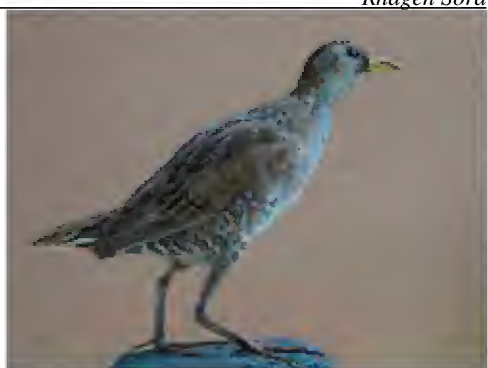
Porzana carolina

Rhagen Sora

A very rare American vagrant.

Meirionnydd: juv., found dead on Aberdyfi
Golf Links, January 1932
(per P. Howlett).

This bird has been in the museum collection since 1932, when it was brought in by a Mr J. Bible who had picked it up dead on the Aberdyfi golf course. It arrived at the museum on the 7th January, the exact date of finding is unknown but almost certainly only 2-3 days earlier. It was originally identified as a Baillon's Crane *P. pusilla* then at some point subsequently re-identified as a Spotted Crane *P. porzana*. Its mis-identification only came to light when the specimen was taken to the 2006 BTO conference as part of an identification quiz - a reminder not to take museum labels at face value !



Common Crane (19, 18, 2)

Grus grus

Garan

A rare visitor to Wales from Central Europe where it breeds, wintering in southern Europe around the Mediterranean and Africa.

Flint: two adults, Fenn's Moss, 30th May (S. Davies).

Two birds, just in the top right hand corner of Wales.

White-rumped Sandpiper (7, 6, 0)

Calidris fuscicollis

Pibydd Tinwen

Breeds N Alaska and arctic Canada. Migrates through USA to winter in Central and Southern America.

2008 Gwent: juv. Goldcliff, 26th Oct. (C. Jones).

This species remains a great rarity in Wales, especially so as its one of the frequently occurring "yanks" in the UK.

Pectoral Sandpiper (65, 42, 3)

Calidris melanotos

Pibydd Cain

Breeds northeast Siberia and northern North America. Winters in southern South America.

2009 Pembroke: Llangloffan Fen, 6th & 7th June
(R. Dobbins, per A. Rogers).

Juv. Dale Airfield, 10th – 14th

Sept. (P. Grennard).

2009 Gwent: juv. Caerleon, 2nd – 9th Oct.
(C. Jones).

2008 Gwent: juv., Goldcliff, 26th Oct.
(C. Jones).



Pectoral Sandpiper, Dale by DJ Astins.

The June Pembroke bird was unusual being a spring bird, where the majority of records of this species occur in September / October (there have only been a total of 10 accepted spring records in Wales, five each in May & June, compared to 100 accepted records in autumn).

Baird's Sandpiper (9, 6, 2)

Calidris bairdii

Pibydd Baird

Breeds extreme NE Siberia on Chukotski peninsula and Wrangel Island, E across N Alaska and Arctic Canada, to N Baffin Island and NW Greenland. Migrates through North American interior to winter in South American Andes, from S Ecuador to Tierra del Fuego.

Anglesey: Juv. Traeth Dulas, 4th – 9th Sept.

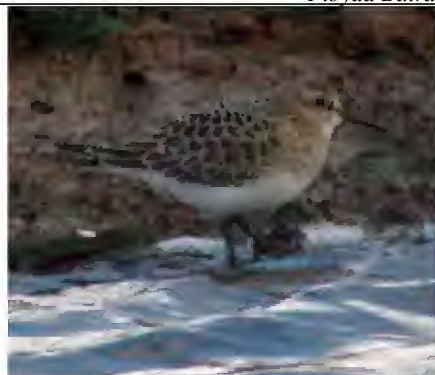
(D. Wright, P. Moore et al, photo right
by S. Culley).

Juv., Alaw Est., 15th – 17th Sept.

(KG Croft).

The last Welsh record was on Bardsey in 2004,

Two in the same county, just days apart, but thought to be different birds.



Spotted Sandpiper (9, 1, 1)

Actitis macularius

Pibydd Brych

Vagrant. Breeds over much of North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland & S to California, Texas & North Carolina. Some winter in coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter in C America, Caribbean & N South America, S to N Argentina & Chile.

Anglesey: adult, Malltraeth, 2nd June (P. Snow).

Great Skua Southern race, 'Southern Skua' (0, 1, 0)

Stercorarius skuaantarcticus/hamiltoni/tonnbergi/maccormicki

2002 Gower: Aberavon and Southgate, 1st–16th February, photo later in report

(D. G. Carrington, S. J. Moon, A. Suter *et al.*).

This constitutes the 3rd accepted British Record, after the first at West Bexington, Dorset in 1996, and 2nd in the Isles of Scilly Oct. 2001 – Jan. 2002.

Bonaparte's Gull (3, 10, 2)

Chroicocephalus philadelphia

Gwylan Bonaparte

Breeds widely across N North America from W and C Alaska through Canada to James Bay. Winters locally on ice-free rivers and lakes in N USA, and S along both coasts of USA to Mexico and Caribbean.

E. Glamorgan: 2nd winter, River Taff, Cardiff, 8th – 26th Mar. (GN Smith *et al.*)

Anglesey: Traeth Dulas, 27th Sept. (Ch. Jones, M. Jones), photo opposite by S. Culley.

Yet another record from the gull-spotters of East Glamorgan – the 4th in the last five years.



Laughing Gull (3, 13, 1)

Larus atricilla

Gwylan Chwerthinog

A transatlantic vagrant, breeding in North America and the Caribbean.

Pembroke: adult, flew north over Skomer, 21st May (D. Boyle).

The last Welsh records came in the aftermath of hurricane Wilma in November 2005.

Royal Tern (2, 0, 1)

Sterna maxima

Morwennol Fawr

Nominate form breeds both coasts of USA, from S California & Maryland, S to Baja California & along Gulf of Mexico S to Yukatan Peninsula, Mexico, & Caribbean islands. Winters S throughout Caribbean & coastal C & South America to Argentina & Ecuador. In W Pal., W African race *albidorsalis* breeds at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, & at four locations in Senegambia. Disperses N to Morocco & S to Angola & N Namibia.

Caernarfon: adult, 15th June
 Porth Ceiriad (D. Lamacraft),
 then Abersoch (S. Hugheston-
 Roberts, Rh. Jones) and
 finally Black Rock Sands,
 Porthmadog, P. Woollen et al)
 then off Llandudno 20th June
 (A. Davies, M. Hughes,
 K. Murray et al).

The only other Welsh records came from
 Kenfig on 24th Nov. 1979 and off
 Mumbles, Gower on 21st Dec. 1987.



Royal Tern, Abersoch, Rh. Jones.

Great Spotted Cuckoo (2, 0, 1)

Clamator glandarius

Cog Frech

A vagrant. It breeds from Iberia and southern France discontinuously east to south-west Iran and south to South Africa.

Pembroke: 1st year, Trefeiddan Moor, St. David's, 10th Mar. (J & M Best).

This has been accepted by BBRC as the first record for the county and only the third for Wales – the previous two were of a dead male found at Plas Penhelig, Aberdyfi, Meirionnydd on 1st Apr. 1956 and one at Newborough, Anglesey 3rd – 15th Apr. 1960.

Alpine Swift (27, 13, 1)

Apus affinus

Gwennol Ddu Fach

Breeds discontinuously in NW Africa and throughout S Europe, N to C France and Switzerland, to Ukraine. To E, breeds locally through Turkey and Caucasus to Iran, Afghanistan and N Pakistan. Winter range unknown, but assumed to be in Afrotropics or W India where separation of local populations from northern migrants not possible.

Carmarthen: Ro Fawr, 16th May (J. Lloyd).

Short-toed Lark (12, 17, 1)

Calandrella brachydactyla Ehedydd Llwyd

Rare visitor. Breeds from Iberia, southern France and NW Africa east to Manchuria.

Flint: Shotwick, 12th – 16th May (B. Barnacal).

Photo opposite.



Woodlark (- , 134, 12)*Lullula arborea**Ehedydd y Coed*

Now widespread in Southern and Eastern England.

Gwent: 10 at Llanarth, 10th & 14th Jan. (J. Lewis).

E. Glamorgan: Cosmeston, 7th Oct. (J. Wilson et al).

Caernarfon: Bardsey, 9th Nov. (SD Stansfield).

We are still waiting for the successful colonisation of Wales, more appear to be wintering, with regularity, in Wales but there has only been the one reported breeding attempt in Gwent in 2006.

Bluethroat (29, 16, 1)*Luscinia svecica**Bronlas*

Migrant, breeding in Arctic / Alpine to cool temperate zones of Europe (white-spotted race) and Scandinavia (red-spotted race).

Anglesey: Female, Cemlyn, 24th – 25th Apr. (B & L Ackers, per S. Culley).



Above: Red-throated Pipit, Skomer by D. Boyle.

Opposite: Bluethroat, Cemlyn by R. Marshall.

Red-throated Pipit (4, 8, 1)*Anthus cervinus**Corhedydd Gyddfgoch*

Rare vagrant.

Pembroke: Skomer, 23rd Oct. (D. Boyle).

The last Welsh record was on Bardsey in October 2005. Of the 13 Welsh records, all bar one (Kenfig 3rd May 1992) have come from the islands (4 on Bardsey, 4 on Skokholm and 4 on Skomer).

Marsh Warbler (11, 7, 1)

Acrocephalus palustris

Telor y Gwerni

A small population breeds in south England. Main breeding grounds are in Eastern Europe.

Pembroke: Skomer, 2nd Nov. (D. Boyle).

First accepted record for that county.



Aquatic Warbler (41, 34, 2)

Acrocephalus paludicola

Telor y Dwr

A scarce autumn migrant from Central Europe.

2009 Gwent: 1st year trapped, Uskmouth, 22nd Aug. (RM Clarke, D. Spittle).

2009 Brecon: 1st year trapped, Llangorse, 28th Aug. (JM Lewis).

2008 Brecon: 1st year trapped, Llangorse, 20th Aug. (A. Lowe, A. King).

The ringing studies at these two sites continue to turn up these rarities.



Aquatic Warbler, Llangorse 2009 JM Lewis.



Aquatic Warbler, Llangorse 2008 by A. King.

Paddyfield Warbler (0, 2, 1)

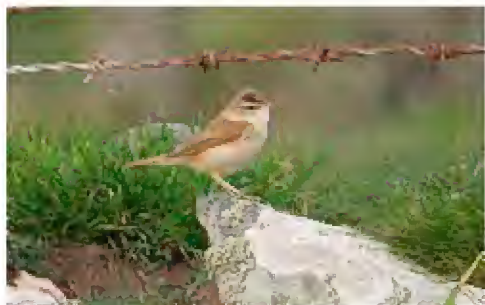
Acrocephalus agricola

Telor Padi

In Europe, restricted to Black Sea coasts from Bulgaria and Danube delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia and SW Siberia, Kazakhstan and NW China, S to Uzbekistan and N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent.

Caernarfon: probably 1st winter, Bardsey, 17th Sept. (RJ Else).

The third Welsh record and the second for Bardsey in as many years (last year seen on 11th Oct.), the only other Welsh record came in 2005 at Llangorse Lake, Brecon, caught on the 11th Sept.



Paddyfield Warbler, Bardsey by SD Stansfield.



Melodious Warbler (142, 49, 1)

Hippolais polyglotta

Telor Per

Breeds northeast Africa, Iberia, France, Switzerland and Italy. Winters in Africa, south of the Sahara.

Caernarfon: Bardsey, 20th – 21st Aug. (B. Porter et al). Photos below by SD Stansfield.



Icterine Warbler (65, 35, 4)

Hippolais icterina

Telor Aur

Breeds from northeast France north to Norway and Sweden and east to western Siberia, also northern Iran. Winters in Africa south of the Sahara.

Caernarfon: Bardsey, 20th May (RJ Else et al).
 Bardsey, 7th June (SV Hine et al)
 Bardsey, 10th June, (SV Hine et al)
 Bardsey, 19th Sept. (SD Stansfield).

Four records, all from the same island – this species remains a Bardsey speciality.



Icterine Warbler, Bardsey by SD Stansfield.

Subalpine Warbler (18 , 28 , 4)

Sylvia cantillans

Telor Brongoch

Four races widely but locally distributed throughout Mediterranean basin from NW Africa and Iberia N to S France, and E to Greece and W Turkey. Winters S of Sahel from Mauritania and Senegal to S Egypt and Sudan. This species dropped off the BBRC list of rare birds, onto the WRP list, as of Jan. 1st 2006 (although the races *albistriata* and *moltani* are still assessed by them).

Caernarfon: 1st S male, Bardsey, 18th Apr. (RJ Else et al).

Immature, Bardsey, 10th – 11th Oct. (SD Stansfield).

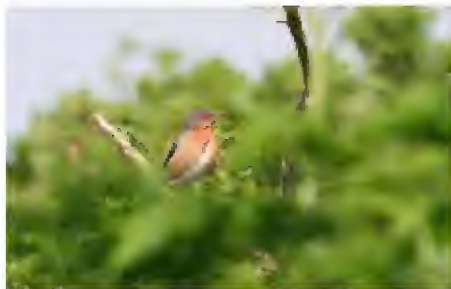
Gwent: Uskmouth, 26th – 28th Apr. (C. Rutter).

Pembroke: male, Ramsey, 23rd June (S. Votier).

Subalp's are turning up with greater frequency of late, although mainly on the islands. The Uskmouth bird offered land-lovers a great opportunity to see this cracking Mediterranean migrant.



Subalpine Warbler, Uskmouth by C. Thomas.



Subalpine Warbler, Ramsey by S. Votier.

Barred Warbler (40, 36, 1)

Sylvia nisoria

Telor Rhesog

Breeds from north Italy, Germany and south Sweden eastwards to Mongolia. Winters northeast Africa south to Kenya and southern Arabia.

Caernarfon: Bardsey, 18th Sept. (P. Massey).

Hume's Warbler (0, 3, 0)

Phylloscopus humei

Telor Hume

BBRC printed, in error, the acceptance of an individual at Soldier's Point, Anglesey on 19th Nov. 2000, when in fact the identification was never proven. There are therefore only three accepted records of this species from Strumble Head, Pembroke on 20th Nov. 1993, in Caernarfon 14th Dec. 2003 – 4th Jan. 2004 and Penrhyn Bay, Caernarfon on 18th Nov. 2007.

Penduline Tit (1, 3, 1)

Remiz pendulinus

Titw Pendil

Widely but locally distributed throughout C & E Europe, from Denmark, Germany & Italy NE to C Sweden & Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous in Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive in Europe. Other races, sometimes regarded as separate species, occur in C Asia & from S Siberia to NE China, & winter NW Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan.

E. Glamorgan: one adult, Cardiff Wetlands, 14th Oct. (RG Smith).

The first Welsh record was on Bardsey, 9th – 13th May 1981. Since then there have only been two accepted records at: Llyn Rhoas Ddu, Anglesey 21st Oct. 1992 and a male + one other at Kenfig, E. Glamorgan 11th Nov. 1996 – 6th Mar. 1997.

Bearded Tit (- , - , -)

Panurus biarmicus

Titw Barfog

Resident in the UK (mainly the south East). Erruptive. Bred in Wales in one's or twos mid 1960's – 1980. Rare since.

Individuals have bred for the last three years at the Uskmouth reed-beds of the Newport Wetland Reserve.

Golden Oriole (- , - , -)

Oriolus oriolus

Euryn

Rare visitor from Mediterranean Europe.

Pembroke: Female, Skomer, 14th – 15th May (D. Boyle).

Caernarfon: non-adult male, Bardsey, 4th June (SD Stansfield).

1st summer male, Bardsey, 8th – 9th June (RJ Else et al).

This species was added to the WRP list in 2007, following concerns by various county recorders over un-substantiated claims and possible confusion with other species. Since then there have been ten accepted records in three years.

Red-backed Shrike (- , 58, 5)

Lanius collurio

Cigydd Cefngoch

Breeds throughout most of mainland Europe.

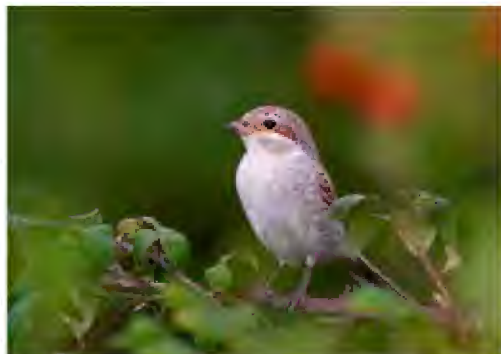
Meirionnydd: male, Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, 24th May (K. Sutton-Spence).

Pembroke: male, Ramsey, 24th May (L. & G. Morgan).

Immature, Skomer, 20th Sept. (D. Boyle).

Anglesey: Female, Hen Felin, Cemlyn, 31st May (J. Dyda).

Caernarfon: Immature, Conwy RSPB, 5th Sept. (J. Hughes).



Red-backed Shrike, Conwy RSPB, left by A. Foster, above by D. Williams.

Woodchat Shrike (67, 25, 1)

Lanius senator

Cigydd Pengoch

Breeds from France and northwest Africa east to Ukraine and southern Iran. Winters in Africa south of the Sahara.

Pembroke: Male, Strumble Head, 1st July (R. Iddon).

Rose-coloured Starling (26, 51, 2)

Sturnus roseus

Drudwen Wridog

Breeds from Hungary and Balkans east to Kazakhstan and southern Iran. Occasionally erupts west in summer. Winters in the Indian region.

2009 Anglesey: adult, Llanfaethlu, June (D. McDermott).

2009 Pembroke: juv. 18th Nov. – 2nd Dec. (per R. Dobbins).

2008 Meirionnydd: adult, Aberdyfi, 25th – 27th May (J. Brown), not as printed last year.

Interesting to note that the majority of recent records relate to “garden-birds” reported by the public.

The digital photography revolution has greatly assisted in the assessment of these records.

Serin (16, 13, 1)

Serinus serinus

Llinos frech

A rare passage migrant.

Pembroke: Skomer, 17th July (D. Boyle).

Another Pembroke speciality, with 18 of the 30 records occurring in that county, 6 of which were on Skomer.

Common Rosefinch (39, 73, 3)

Carpodacus erythrinus

Llinos Goch

Breeds from Germany and southern Sweden eastwards to Kamchatka and from Georgia eastwards to central China. Has bred in Britain on a few occasions. Winters in India, southeast Asia and southern China.

Anglesey: male, 7th July (G. Nelson).

Another garden-speciality. Interestingly this one was seen in a garden, just round the corner from a juv./female at Cemaes seen the year before.



Brown-headed Cowbird (0, 0, 1)

Molothrus ater

Tresglen y Gwartheg

Breeds E Canada from C Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia, and NE USA from C Minnesota to Massachusetts, S through Appalachian Mountains to SW Carolina and NW Georgia. Winters from Guatemala S to Peru and Venezuela.

Pembroke: male, Angle, 14th – 15th July (per County Recorder).

The first record for Wales and only the 4th for the UK – following on from the first at Islay, Scotland April 1988. Two others were accepted this year – both in spring.



Identification agreed – but bird likely to be escaped/falconers:

Golden Eagle: 2nd winter bird, at Nant Irfon, Brecon, 28th Mar. – 3rd Sept. at least (J&P Clarke, W. Jones).

Gyr Falcon: Llanhennock, Gwent, 5th Oct. (B. Press per County Recorder).

APPENDIX I - List of records that were deemed NOT PROVEN

Many of the records were not accepted because the Panel were not convinced, on the evidence before us, that the identification was fully established. Only in a very few cases were the Panel satisfied that a mistake had been made.

Species	Site	Date	Reason for Not Proven
Black Kite	Treowen, Gwent	23/4/08	Other species not ruled out
Montagu's Harrier, male	Porthmadog, Caern/Meiri	6/8/08	Other species not ruled out
Spotted Crake	Cors Caron, Ceredigion	4-20/12/09	Other species not ruled out
Cattle Egret, 2	Nevern, Pembs	9/12/09	Other species not ruled out
Great White Egret	Ferryside, Carmarthen	22/7/09	Other species not ruled out
White Stork	Salmon Scar, Carmarthen	7 or 8/6/09	Other species not ruled out
Grey-headed Wagtail	South Stack, Anglesey	29/6/08	Other species not ruled out
Red-backed Shrike, male	Snowdon, Caernarfon	25/6/09	Other species not ruled out

BBRC Not-proven:

Glossy Ibis	Mathry, Pembroke	14/10/09
Glossy Ibis	Baglan, Gower	6/9/09
Citrine Wagtail	St. Govan's, Pembroke	10/8/09
Red-rumped Swallow	Hensol, E. Glamorgan	30/4/04

APPENDIX II - List of records that have been PENDED for more information or requiring further assessment.

Species	Site	Date	Observers/Describers
Caspian Gull	Llandegfedd Res., Gwent	15, 22 & 23/2/08	P Bristow
Hippolais Warbler	Great Orme, Caernarfon	17/5/09	M. Hughes

SPEICES UNDER REVIEW:

Three species are currently under review, the results of which will be published later this year:

- Siberian Chiffchaff – *tristis* – awaiting publication of additional identification updates.
- Common Redpoll – criteria have been agreed, as published previously in Welsh Birds.
- Grey-headed Wagtail – identification criteria for females

WRP has spent many hours researching and refining assessment criteria for these difficult races and will publish papers on these next year. Observers should be aware that there is a lot of confusion right across the UK with the top two races, which certain forms acceptable in one area but not in another (this is especially true with the Redpolls). In light of this WRP has taken the decision that for acceptance of any of the above, a series of photographs must be included with the submission.

Records in these categories include:

Species	Site	Date
Grey-headed Wagtail, female	Bardsey	28/5/08
Chiffchaff – <i>tristis</i> 1 st s	Bardsey	20/4/07
Chiffchaff – <i>tristis</i> 2	Bardsey	22/4/08
Chiffchaff, <i>tristis</i>	Bardsey	10-13/11/09
Sib. Chiffchaff	Porth Eilian, Anglesey	6/11/09
Common Redpoll, male	Great Orme	6/4/07
Common Redpoll	Bwlchgwyn, Clwyd	8/4-10/4/08
Common Redpoll	Gwent	
Common Redpolls	Bardsey	3 on 11/5/06, 1 on 2/6/06 1 on 11/7/06, 1 on 20/10/06
Common Redpoll	Carmel Head, Anglesey	25/5/09
Common Redpoll	Cors Caron, Ceredigion	11/12/09

APPENDIX III - List of records that have not been submitted.

An incomprehensive list, of birds claimed on Birdline or to county recorders, which at present have not been substantiated with a description. If anyone has information on any of these, please send it direct to the WRP Secretary. Thank you.

Pectoral Sandpiper	Coedbach, Carmarthen	25/6/09
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SOUTHERN SKUA at Aberavon, E. Glamorgan

It's not often that a birder has a possible new species for the UK in sitting in a cardboard box in a corner of the office. There was ample time to speak to and meet several experts, send out photographs and measurements but ultimately we were never quite sure of its identity. This happened in February 2002 after Andrew Suter found an exhausted sea bird cowering in a car park opposite 'Arctic Cash and Carry' in Port Talbot. He brought it to Kenfig reserve centre on Friday 1st February where it was fed, photographed, measured and observed by several birders. On Sunday it was taken to the Gower Bird Hospital for rehabilitation. On arrival it weighed 806g and was close to starvation. It was released on 16th February from East-cliff, Southgate on the Gower when it weighed a healthy 1203g.

The bird was clearly a skua but opinions beyond that varied widely between observers. We certainly learned firsthand why the large dark *Stercorarius* skuas are regarded as a taxonomically challenging group! Some people were very excited as they thought it was a new species for the UK, while others dismissed such ideas, posting on the internet that "it was just bonxie in a box". Nagging doubts and debates over its identity continued and measurements were made, photos collated and feathers stored for later DNA testing.



Interestingly, the bird was in active primary moult with feathers 1-7 (counting outwards) fresh and new, p8 was 3/4 grown, p9 was just bursting out of the sheath (so 'in pin') and p10 was a previous generation (and very worn, so probably affecting wing length measured at 365mm left and 362mm right). This could be important for identification because it is believed that members of this skua species group may have different moult strategies. Unfortunately, not enough is known about moult during the pelagic periods of life as so few moulting birds like ours are ever found. The wing coverts also appeared to show three generations of feathers suggesting the skua hatched at the latest in 2000.

Later, researchers in Glasgow University carried out tests on the DNA of this bird and a similar one found on the Scillies in October 2001. The results concluded that both individuals belonged to the Brown Skua group. Measurements taken of the Port Talbot bird, suggest that it may be of the race *antarcticus*. However, the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) has concluded that both this bird and one taken into care on the Scilly Isles in Oct 2001 were 'southern *Stercorarius skuas*' of one of the subspecies *antarcticus*, *hamiltoni*, *lonnbergi* or *maccormicki*. The BBRC is examining the issue to see if further identification to subspecies is possible. The subspecies *antarcticus*, *hamiltoni* and *lonnbergi* form the 'Brown Skua' grouping and *maccormicki* is the 'South Polar Skua'. The TSC is assessing the evidence for species level splits within or between these groups and nominate birds.

DG Carrington

GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO – 1st record for Pembroke and 3rd for Wales

At around 09:30 my wife Marion and I set off on a walk from the Pencarnan Caravan site intending to check Raven nest sites along the coast path in the vicinity of St Justinian. On arrival at the northern edge of Trefeiddan Moor both of us were quick to pick up the obvious presence of a largish bird sitting still on the edge of a stand of withy at a distance of 150 metres or more.

Using binoculars for the best part of two or more minutes, and until the bird flew, we described the bird to each other. Because a strong breeze blew from our right, and the distance involved, I placed my bins against a telegraph pole to steady the image. When the bird flew, we followed its short flight of 100 or so metres to another withy stand where it alighted and once again sat silent and still. At this point we walked closer, but before we could add anything further to our description, it flew towards a dense area of withy and gorse on the edge of the moor and out of view. We never saw it again.

The first words spoken as we viewed the bird were - it's a cuckoo, (which was obvious because of its general shape, size and horizontal posture), "a foreign cuckoo", exclaimed Marion. Next we remarked upon its two-tone colour: dark above and white below. While steadying the image I was able to discern pale spotting of the upper parts and what appeared to be a single larger spot in the area of the primary/secondary wing coverts on the edge of the wing. Marion said the throat was cream in colour, something I could not discern, no doubt, because I have colour perception limitations. (She admitted later she did not know that Great Spotted Cuckoos have yellowish throats). I was in no doubt we had found our first British Greater-Spotted Cuckoo.

When we lost sight of the bird, I returned to our caravan to collect my telescope. Following a long period of searching, about four hours, we reluctantly conceded defeat. Any chance of finding the cuckoo the following morning was quickly dashed with the arrival of a slow moving warm front that delivered drizzle and poor visibility to the area for the remainder of that day. We searched the area over the next few days but to no avail.

We have seen many different types of cuckoos, in Europe, Africa, America and Asia. From our extensive experience and on the basis of size, jizz and plumage, we are sure that this bird was a 1st year Great Spotted Cuckoo.

John Best

This has been accepted by BBRC as the first record for the county and only the third for Wales – the previous two were of a dead male found at Plas Penhelig, Aberdyfi, Meirionnydd on 1st Apr. 1956 and one at Newborough, Anglesey 3rd – 15th Apr. 1960.

MARSH WARBLER, South Valley, Skomer 2nd November 2009

At about 10ish I was on my way back to North Haven to get on with some work having walked the valleys without seeing much in the way of migrants. I decided I could spare a few more minutes so I thought I'd quickly check down the bottom of South Valley. After walking a few yards down the track a male Blackcap flew up from the bracken followed by a second bird that looked like it was going to be a Garden Warbler. This second bird landed and I immediately realized I was looking at an *Acro* that didn't look like a Reed Warbler – not the best scenario when you've got to get to work!

Fortunately the bird wasn't especially skulky and seemed to want to stay in a 20m stretch of tangled dying vegetation by the side of the stream. The bird appeared on the big side for an *Acro* and obviously had big long wings so I was happy pretty much straight away it wasn't a Blyth's Reed Warbler and the complete lack of any rufous in the plumage and its stout bill had me leaning towards Marsh Warbler, although I wasn't sure I could 100% rule out it being an odd Reed Warbler. I knew there were wing formula differences between the two so I tried to get as many photos as possible of its wings over the next hour or so before I really had to get to work.



I remembered having read a couple of articles on identifying late *Acros* on the internet and quickly found them when I got in. After reading them I went from being 90% happy it was a Marsh Warbler to 90% happy it couldn't be a Marsh Warbler!

Brian Small states 'As a final "throw-away" comment, I would suspect that many claims of Marsh Warbler from the second half of October are very likely not. As this bird has shown, there are 1st winter Reed Warblers out there (possibly *fuscus*) that match Marsh Warbler in all expected ways, but close examination (as here) proves they are not. I have seen a number of birds on the Isles of Scilly claimed (and published) as Marsh Warbler which in my opinion were not - including one published in BB. Be careful, it's a dangerous world out there! (The 'Kelynack' *Acro*, some comments by Brian Small, www.surfbirds.com/mb/Features/kelynack-acro.html).

And Alex Lees puts it a bit stronger: 'One constant remains, find an *Acro* after October, and you'll be fighting a losing battle trying to convince anyone it's a Marsh. High profile mis-identifications of problem birds such as the Kelynack *Acro* ought to put off anyone thinking about sneaking in a cheeky late Marsh' (Lundy *Acro* revisited, by Alex Lees, www.freewebs.com/punkbirder/lundyacro.htm)

After examining my photos on the computer I still wasn't entirely happy I could identify the bird as I wasn't sure I'd clinched the wing formula, but at least I knew what to concentrate on now for when I could get back up there later in the afternoon. I posted some photos on the Pembs Bird Blog & got a few mates on the east coast to have a look at them and finally went off to do some work.

Unfortunately the weather changed that afternoon & by the time I could get back to South Valley it was dark and raining and, although I quickly found the bird again in exactly the same place, I added nothing to what I'd seen earlier.

I got a few comments back from people with far more experience of Marsh Warblers than me that evening and everyone seemed happy it was a Marsh Warbler. With a bit more time I went back through the photos again and on closer examination I'm at least 99% certain now that you can see the wing formula and confirm the identification as a Marsh Warbler.

In the field this bird never looked like a Reed Warbler. I've seen quite a few 'interesting' late autumn Acros on the east coast but I've never seen anything that didn't just look and sound like a Reed Warbler. The general colour of the bird's upperparts was a uniform olivey-brown completely lacking any rufous, even on its rump. All the wing feathers were dark centred with obvious pale fringes, especially noticeable on the tertials. It had an obvious pale eye-ring but no obvious supercilium, giving it a gentle expression rather than the angry look of a Reed Warbler. The underparts were off white with almost a yellowish wash on the flanks and a contrasting white throat. Structurally it had a strikingly stout bill and clearly long primaries. It occasionally made a low soft 'chuck' call, a call I wouldn't associate with a Reed Warbler.



Without a camera that would have been it. With a camera and some half decent photos of the wing it's possible to make out some details of the bird's wing formula that would have been impossible to see in the field, and are hopefully enough to confirm it's identification as a Marsh Warbler.

The single most important wing formula detail seems to be the position of the start of the emargination on the third primary relative to the other primaries. On Reed Warbler it should fall level with about the 10th primary, on Marsh warbler it falls level with about the 7th primary. There is apparently a bit of overlap in the length of the second primary on Reed and Marsh Warblers, but having a second primary longer than the fourth is a good supporting feature for Marsh Warbler. The photo below seems to confirm the bird on Skomer had the correct wing formula for a Marsh Warbler – the third primary is slightly out of alignment making things not quite as clear as they could have been. The photo also shows the claws, another good Marsh Warbler feature apparently is the lack of contrast between the greyish upperside and yellowish underside compared to the very dark brown upperside contrasting strongly with the yellow underside on a Reed Warbler. Fortunately there was no sign of the bird the next day – I hate birds like this!

Dave Boyle

Request for photos of rare & scarce Welsh birds

Photos are desperately needed of many Welsh rare & scarce birds, particularly of those seen before the millennium, for the forthcoming book on Welsh Rare Birds that hopefully will come out next year. If anyone has photos or slides of any of the following or others, please don't hesitate to get in touch with WRP Secretary (e-mail: welshrarebirds@tiscali.co.uk). Many thanks.

Bean Goose
King Eider – Black Rock Sands 1989
White-billed Diver – Holyhead Harbour 1991
Pied-billed Grebe – Kenfig 1988 or Cosmeston 1999.
Little Shearwater – Skomer 1981-2
American Bittern – Magor 1981
Montagu's Harrier
Little Crane – Conwy 2000 ?
Bustards ?
Stone Curlew
Killdeer – Holyhead 1994
Greater Sandplover – Wentloog 1988
Pacific Golden Plover
Sociable Plover – Neath 1984
Least Sandpiper – Aberthaw 1972
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper – Forryd 1996
Broad-billed Sandpiper
Hudsonian Whimbrel – Goldcliff
Upland Sandpiper
Marsh Sandpiper – Conwy 1996
Grey-tailed Tattler – Ynysir
Wilson's Phalarope
Ross's Gull
Kumlein's Gull
Caspan Tern

Royal Tern – Kenfig 1987
Lesser Crested Tern – Cemlyn 1982
Forster's Tern
Bridled Tern- Cemlyn 1988
Red-rumped Swallow
Olive-backed Pipit – Bardsey 2003 / Skomer 2001 & 2002
Grey Catbird
Siberian Stonechat
Lanceolated Warbler – Bardsey
Great Reed Warbler – Conwy 2005 or earlier ones?
Ruppell's Warbler – Aberdaron 1995
Hume's Leaf Warbler
Penduline Tit
Isabelline Shrike
Lesser Grey Shrike
Red-eyed Vireo
Serin
Arctic Redpoll
Two-barred Crossbill – Denbigh 1991
Black-headed Bunting
Red-headed Bunting
Balitmore Oriole – Roch

Any of the 1960-1990 rare American passerines from
Bardsey, Skomer or Skokholm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to take the opportunity of thanking all the observers for producing descriptions and the County Recorders for sending them on to WRP. We would also like to thank county recorders for their helpful comments on this document. We would also like to thank all those who contributed photographs and articles. We hope that more be send in and included next year.

This and previous reports are available on the WOS website as downloadable pdf's. It is likely that future editions of this report will only be available there – i.e. no hard copies produced, as WOS attempts to reduce its printing costs.

I would therefore like to take the opportunity of thanking our printers, E.L. Jones Printers, of Cardigan, who have done WOS & WRP proud over the last ten years. Staff have always been knowledgeable and helpful. They have done a great job and have produced excellent results.

Jon Green, on behalf of the Welsh Records Panel

WELSH BIRDS

'Welsh Birds' is the journal of the Welsh Ornithological Society and is published thrice annually, in June, November (Rarities edition) and January (Welsh Bird Report and the Ringing Report).

Papers for Welsh Birds are welcomed by the Editor on any aspect of Welsh Ornithology. The Society is anxious that the journal should accurately reflect present ornithological activity in Wales. Thus we hope that all workers, professional or amateur, with results of bird studies in Wales, will always consider publishing information about these here. All papers will be reviewed by the Editor and an independent referee. Authors should follow the format of papers published in the journal and guidelines for authors have been drawn up and are available from the Editor (address inside front cover). Papers are accepted and published in either Welsh or English. Papers in Welsh should be supplied with captions to tables and figures in both Welsh and English and with an English summary. This follows standard international practice.

Short notes on interesting or unusual features of behaviour recorded in Wales are also welcome. An accumulation of such items is of considerable value. Notes should be short and succinct, ideally of not more than half a page in length. Notes may also be submitted in either Welsh or English.

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The Welsh Ornithological Society was founded by the Bird Clubs and Societies in the Principality for the benefit of birds in Wales.

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